



HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

An electronic newsletter in support of public safety services in Montana

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IM Weekly Highlights

- Another SOP Technical Assistance Workshop is scheduled in conjunction with the Montana Chapter of APCO conference on Tues., Oct. 27 in Missoula, featuring Ben Knast, from the COPS office.
- Dale Osborne, Montana Highway Patrol, has recently relocated to Helena. Here is his most up-to-date contact information:
Dale Osborne, Lead Communications Tech
Montana Highway Patrol
dosborne@mt.gov
(406) 437-2514 Cell
(406) 444-4274 Helena Shop
- Crews continue to work on the following sites:
 - ▶ Concrete slabs were poured for the tower foundation, shelter and propane tank at the Greeno site.
 - ▶ Concrete work was completed last Friday at the Colburn site.
 - ▶ Crews have forms ready to pour the tower foundation at the Sawtell site.
- Ian and Kevin updated DES coordinators on the status of the IM Project at the DES annual conference in Lewistown.
- Motorola continues its work to complete King, Blue, Pinkham and Big Mountain trunking sites.

Mobile Data Consortium Weighing Options

By Scott Bradford sbradford@mt.gov

The Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) Consortium continues to explore options for providing needed mobile data access to consortium members and responders throughout Montana. During the consortium meeting on Sept. 17, a number of options and topics were discussed. Some consortium members are continuing to utilize the aging UHF system, while others are switching to commercial options that provide additional bandwidth and capability. Prospects of a private system providing the necessary bandwidth to meet first responder needs are not looking good because they do not appear to be financially viable.

Kevin Bruski, IM Executive Director and Scott Bradford, Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB), provided a summary of a modified pilot project involving an application for a 700 MHz waiver and a public-private partnership to provide the service, similar to a pilot program being initiated in North Dakota. This pilot project could provide another opportunity to evaluate high-speed data access options. However, some concerns were expressed about costs not being fully defined and the fact that

the pilot technology did not differ much from that available from current commercial vendors. Hence, the group did not endorse the direction of this pilot program, but is keeping options open for future consideration.

The MDT consortium also named Scott O'Connell, Public Safety Systems Administrator with the Helena Police Dept., to formally represent the consortium on the IM Technical Committee. This will ensure that mobile data concerns are represented in that group.

Sheriff Jim Cashell, Gallatin County, announced his resignation as chair of the MDT Consortium. Sheriff Leo Dutton is being asked to serve on an interim basis. PSSB thanks Sheriff Cashell for his many years of leadership in promoting and deploying mobile data in Montana.

Construction Begins on Sierra Peak Site

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

Construction crews broke ground on the new Sierra Peak Interoperability Montana (IM) tower site located in Madison County in late Sept. The site sits on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ground near the south end of the Ruby Mountain Range at 8,130 feet elevation. Computerized propagation maps indicate that the site will provide coverage of most of the upper Ruby drainage/Sweetwater area, the west end of Madison County from Dillon up Interstate 15 to Interstate 90, and a large area of the Ruby Valley.

The site also will provide a redundant microwave loop into the Dillon dispatch center, and it will help connect

Madison County with the IM system.

The site is being constructed with funds from the Public Safety Interoperable

Communications (PSIC) grant and will cost about \$310,000 to complete. It will consist of a 100-foot



A contractor out of Dillon puts the finishing touches on the foundation for the new tower at the Sierra Peak site in Madison County. The site is located in the Ruby Mountains between Cottonwood and Stone Creeks. Many thanks go to Steve DiGiovanna, Madison County DES, for the photo and background information.

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tower, shelter and back-up emergency power. Completion of the entire project is scheduled for late summer 2010.

Early Snow Hits Montana Mountain Tops

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. The photo below, taken this week at the Sawtell site, elevation 9,880 feet, aptly illustrates risks involved due to approval and funding delays. Sawtell is a key site in southwest Montana, and is funded through Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant money. Last winter and this spring, delays were experienced in FEMA approval of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) submissions for Sawtell and other related sites.



Sabre Tower crews continue work on the Sawtell Site this week despite early heavy snow fall!

Because of issues with access and weather concerns for states with high mountain sites, the Interoperability Montana Project requested assistance from Senator Baucus' and Representative Rehberg's staff, who were very helpful in facilitating the approval of the NEPA documents. Montana received approval for these locations in June and July; however, contract and manufacturing lead times are often two to three months out.

As the photo shows, constructing and deploying high-elevation communication sites involves significant challenges, especially in view of short construction windows. The good news is IM contractor, Sabre Towers, continues work on these sites. With the forecast showing additional snow and cold over the next couple of weeks, we'll keep our fingers crossed for a late Indian summer that will allow crucial construction to continue.

Active Northern Tier Meeting

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

Members of the Northern Tier Interoperability Consortium (NTIC) actively discussed several issues at its Oct.1 meeting in Havre. Kevin Bruski provided an update on the status of the microwave system and Harris-Stratex activities. Harris-Stratex has completed its change-out of transceiver boards on the microwave system. Motorola is still performing coverage acceptance testing. The IM Project has accepted the Central Phase of the Northern Tier from Motorola. The group continues to review progress leading toward acceptance of all three phases of the radio system.

NTIC members also discussed code plugs, computer programming, fleet mapping, and updates to subscriber units. In addition, Kevin addressed the issue of sustainability and interim maintenance.

The next Northern Tier meeting is set for Thurs., Nov. 5 from 9:00 am to noon at the Great Northern Inn, 1345 1st St. in Havre.

Upcoming Meetings

- **Note:** The IM Finance and Governance Meetings scheduled for Tues., Oct. 13 as well as the IM Project Directors meeting on Wed., Oct. 14 have been cancelled.
- **Oct. 15 (Thurs.)**
I-15/90 Consortium
Butte • 10:00 am
Butte-Silver Bow Chamber, 1000 George St.
- **Note:** No CMICC or SCMICC meetings in Oct.
- **Oct. 21 (Wed.)**
Eastern Tier (ETIC)
Glendive • 10:00 am
Dawson County Courthouse Community Room
207 W. Bell
- **Oct. 22 (Thurs.)**
Big Sky 11 Consortium
Billings • 8:30 am - Technical Committee
• 10:00 am - Board Meeting
Billings Police Dept. Training Center, 4810 Midland Rd.
- **Oct. 26 (Mon.)**
IM Technical Committee
Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
MACo Large Conference Rm., Lower Level
2715 Skyway Drive
- **Oct. 27 (Tues.)**
Technical Assistance Training
Missoula • Holiday Inn Parkside, 200 South Pattee St.
- **Oct. 28-29 (Wed.-Thurs.)**
Montana APCO Conference
Missoula • Holiday Inn Parkside, 200 South Pattee St.
More information at: <http://www.mtapco.org>